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THE MAN OF FAITH

BY ABERCROMBIE

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THE

MAN OF FAITH,

OR THE

HARMONY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

AND

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

By JOHN ABERCROMBIE, M. D.

Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, Author of "An Enquiry concerning the Intellectual Powers," and "The Philosophy of the Moral Feelings."

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TO THE READER.

THIS little work, from the pen of Dr. Abercrombie, of Edinburgh, was originally intended for gratuitous distribution among the families of a district in that city, which he often visited in the course of professional duty. As a lay-elder of the Church of Scotland, and deeply interested in the progress of religion, he was accustomed to make his visits to the sick, the occasion of exerting that religious influence, so peculiarly within the power of the Christian physician.

In his introductory address to the families for whom it was designed, he alludes to the various exciting subjects which had been agitated in that community, and which had so strong a tendency to divert attention from the *first great object* of life, and to engross it inordinately, if not supremely, in the concerns of *this world.*

He addresses a friendly voice to them, in the hope of arresting their attention and engaging their hearts in the highest and noblest of all human pursuits, manifesting at once his sincere and cordial interest in their temporal and eternal welfare.

He says, "it is related of a distinguished clergyman of a former day, that he was found fault with by his friends, for "not preaching to the times." He replied in terms which carry with them a weight of meaning worthy of the most deep and serious attention,—"When so many brethren," said he, "are preaching to the times, will you not allow one poor brother to preach for eternity."

"For some years past, this country," he adds, "has resounded from end to end, with discussions and contests which relate to 'the times.' But amid all these commotions has it never occurred to you that life is passing rapidly on, and that it will very soon be over; that a period is approaching with fearful rapidity, when, regarding each of us, "time shall be no longer?" Has it never occurred to you to think, with deep

and personal interest, of that hour when all our best friends can do for us, will be, to convey us with suitable decency to the grave,—to cover us with green turf,—and then to return to the tumult of life, with the same activity and interest as if we had never been? To them the face of nature shall bloom fresh and fair, as it bloomed before; and the full tide of life shall flow on as it flowed before; and some pageant shall again move on, in all its mock majesty and a busy crowd shall follow it with looks of wonder and shouts of applause, till another, and another of them shall drop into the grave, and life, with all its dread responsibilities, shall close upon them forever."

There can scarcely be a more appropriate little work for *our own times* at home, than this unpretending but precious volume. It is written in a plain, affectionate and winning style. A Christian can scarcely rise from its perusal without remarking in his own breast, a responsive monition, saying awake, awake, put on the armor of faith.

Our country presents the spectacle of a great and growing people, where the mass of *cultivated* mind is untramelled, free to speak, to think and to act. It seems as if the human mind pent up for ages within the limits, which the civil, political and ecclesiastical institutions over a great portion of the globe, have imposed upon its action, had here found its freedom. The incumbent weight has been removed, and there are found beneath, the elements of power, intellectual and moral, that we almost tremble to see unconfined. Throughout our land these elements are beginning to awake. They feel their freedom. They attempt to rise, and finding restraint removed, they show by their incipient movements, that they *may* rise and rage with ungovernable fury.

In this crisis, whatever subject of interest arises in the community is seized upon by *the public mind* with giant strength. It would seem as if the mighty agent so long held in abeyance, delighted in any occasion, however trivial, for exhibiting his power. There is the greatest danger, that the Christian in these

scenes of excitement may forget the momentous responsibilities which his situation in such a community involves.

It is of the first importance that the *church*, in such a time as this, should maintain a high standard of holiness and activity.

This little volume will be found a most timely incentive and auxiliary to the work of Christian culture;—in promoting that *purity of heart* and *devotedness of life*, which the author so happily delineates. It is fervently to be hoped that the mild, gentle, Christlike spirit, which marks these pages may eminently characterize those among us, who are now exerting influence by the pen and the press. "The power of gentleness is irresistible," says one author. And if at any time there was needed a soothing influence in any community to be put in requisition when excitement rages—it is now with us. And every Christian should so live and speak, that his influence may be like oil upon the waters.

The author in his introduction adds, "Life has dread responsibilities, when viewed in re-

lation to a life which is to come. Whatever be our situation in this world,—be it high or low;—be it one of ease and affluence, or of labor, poverty, and suffering, it is the one which has been assigned to us by the great disposer of all things; and every rank and situation has attached to it peculiar duties and peculiar responsibilities, for which we must render a strict account to Him, at the day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, and every man shall be judged according to his works. Amid the bustle and the tumult of life, we are too apt to frame to ourselves excuses for violations of the laws of God, and for the neglect of sacred and important duties; such excuses may satisfy ourselves, and they may sometimes satisfy our fellow men, but the solemn question is, whether they will satisfy Him, whose law is holy, and whose justice is inflexible. Were such excuses admitted for the violation of human laws, the whole system of civil society would run into confusion and anarchy. Have we any ground for believing that the laws of God will be exercised in a manner, which, in regard to hu-

man laws, would be reckoned a mockery of justice?

But, besides the actual obedience which we owe to the laws of God, and the actual duties which pertain to our various relations to our fellow-men, there is a most solemn class of responsibilities which belongs immediately to ourselves. There is a part within us which shall not die,—an immortal spirit, which must be eternally happy in the presence and enjoyment of God, or eternally miserable under the weight of his righteous displeasure. To every man is committed the solemn trust of seeking to have this immortal being prepared for its appearance before God. It must be the subject of great, and careful, and anxious moral culture, in each man who is really alive to his high destinies as a moral and immortal being. This culture consists of a discipline within, open only to the eye of him who seeth in secret. By his mercy and his grace, indeed, ample means have been provided, and the all-powerful aid of his Holy Spirit is promised to every one who feels the need of a strength that is not in man: but an

essential movement must be in the mind of the individual himself;—leading him to the diligent use of these means, and the earnest and habitual application for this aid,—and, in the whole of this mighty undertaking, the great and solemn responsibility is his own.

With these facts and considerations continually placed before us, and impressed upon our attention, it cannot but strike us as a matter of astonishment that the bulk of mankind seem so little to feel their importance. Engrossed by the cares, anxieties, and business of life,—or occupied by its frivolities and follies, year after year passes over them, and life hastens to its close, while their eager and undivided attention is devoted to pursuits which they are soon to quit for ever. Thus old age, perhaps, creeps on, and the mind, so long unaccustomed to serious thought, continues to be occupied to the last with the concerns of the passing hour;—or acute disease, it may be, arrests the man in the midst of all the vigor and activity of life; and the truth bursts upon him in a moment, that he is hurrying into an eternal world,

while he has made no preparation for the wondrous change, and scarcely devoted one serious thought to the fearful venture.

There cannot be a question of more intense interest, than what is the cause of this extraordinary and inconsistent conduct. It is simply and primarily to be ascribed to the want of calm and serious thought. Amid the occupations and the tumult of life, men do not seriously question themselves as to what they are,—and what they are doing,—and whither they are going,—and what preparation they are making for the life which is to come. There is nothing which makes so great a difference between one man and another, as the practice of calm and serious thinking. To those who have been unaccustomed to it, there is required at first an effort, but it is entirely in their own power to repeat this effort if they will, and when they will. It becomes every day easier by perseverance and habit; and the habit so acquired, exerts a material influence upon their condition as responsible and immortal beings.

In that great process, therefore, in which

consists the healthy condition of any man as a moral being, there is a most important step, of which he must be conscious as an exercise of his own mind. You feel that you have here a power, however little you may attend to the exercise of it. You can direct your thoughts to any subject you please;—you can confine them to objects which are before you at the time, or occurrences which have passed during the day;—or you can send them back to events which took place many years ago. You can direct them to persons whom you are in the habit of meeting from day to day, or to those who are separated from you by thousands of miles. You can place before you persons who lived, and events which occurred, long before you came into existence, and you can anticipate and realize events which are not likely to occur until you have ceased to exist.

Study these wondrous processes of your mind; observe what power you have over them, and what consequences of eternal importance must arise from exercising them aright. If you can thus think of any subject you please,

why cannot you think of God,—of his power, his wisdom, his holiness, his justice,—of his law which he has written in your heart, and in his revealed word? Why cannot you think of, and realize, the period when you shall lie down in the grave,—and that tremendous moment when all that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live, and shall arise to judgment? Such truths as these, duly considered or thought of, could not fail, under divine influence to exercise a powerful effect upon all our habits of thinking and acting in this life. To think of and consider them is a process of the mind which it is the imperative duty of every rational being to perform;—if we neglect it, the guilt, with all its fearful consequences, is entirely our own.

Cultivate, then, this important power of thinking of "things which are not seen," and consequences of inconceivable moment will result from it both to your happiness and your moral condition, and to your whole habits of feeling and judging respecting the things of this life, and of the life which is to come. Retire

often from the tumult of the world, and seriously propose to yourself the questions,—what are my leading objects in this life, which is hastening to a close, and what provision am I making for that life which is never to end;—in the exercise of that power which I possess of thinking of whatever I please, what are the subjects which chiefly occupy my thoughts,—what degree of thought am I directing to God and to his law, and to that account which I am soon to render to him; in what degree is my conduct regulated by a sense of his presence, and by the authority of his will; to what extent do I make his word the rule of my life, and look to it habitually as the light of my feet and the lamp of my paths. Am I discharging the various duties which belong to the situation in which I am placed, in a manner which will bear the dread investigation of that day, when I must give an account of myself to God. Am I a parent, have I intrusted to me the sacred charge of beings who like myself, are destined to an eternal existence; what attention am I devoting to the solemn responsibility of train-

ing them for immortality. Let me review my whole course of life, my whole habits of thinking, and the objects and pursuits which chiefly occupy my thoughts and engage my active exertions, and say,—am I living for time, or am I living for eternity.

It is such a course of inquiry as this that determines a man's moral condition. He may read many books, and hear many sermons,—he may become well acquainted with doctrines and learn to argue acutely on points of faith,—but whatever progress he has made in the knowledge of truth, the great business of life is yet to begin, till he seriously enters on the mental exercise of applying it in this manner to his own condition in the sight of God, who searches his heart, and who perceives, at a single glance, the whole details of his moral history. It is an exercise which may require little expense of time; in the most laborious and busy life, leisure will be found for it when there exists a due impression of its supreme importance. When the exercise has grown into a habit, it will mingle itself with the daily

concerns of life, and will shed a directing and enlightening influence over them all,—producing a habitual sense of the divine presence, and a uniform reliance on divine direction and aid in every action of life. It was thus that the king of Israel "remembered God upon his bed, and meditated on him in the night watches," and his earnest desire above all earthly things was, that he might "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple;" that is, to live under a constant sense of the presence of God, to contemplate his character and perfections, and to seek the directions of the Almighty in all his ways.

The mind which has been disciplined to this habit of exalted thought, will never be in want of subjects on which it may be exercised. In the works of creation, above, and beneath, and within, it will trace with wonder the wisdom and the power of him who made them all. In the ways of providence it will trace the daily working of his hand, and will learn to cast itself, with filial confidence, on the disposal of him

who rules among the children of men. In the word of God, it contemplates him in new and wondrous characters, at once of justice and of mercy, and it finds there a subject of thought, which, the more frequently and more closely it is studied, presents features of new and increasing interest. Taken in its more enlarged connections, it affords a study for the most profound reasoner; while its shortest passages often contain a weight of meaning accessible to the most ordinary understanding, and adapted to every relation of life. We ought, therefore, to read diligently the word of God, and to cultivate the habit of directing our thoughts to the important lessons which may be drawn from it. This is a mental exercise, highly interesting in itself, and productive of the best effects, both on the tranquillity of our minds, and the regulation of our conduct. It should be accompanied by earnest prayer for the influence of the Holy Spirit, to enlighten our minds in the knowledge of truth, and to impress it upon our hearts in such a manner, that it may become the regulating principle of our whole character.

The habit of calm and serious thought, which has been the subject of these observations, may become the prevailing or habitual exercise of a duly regulated mind. But there are special seasons of retirement and reflection, which are peculiarly favorable to it, and specially intended for its cultivation. Among these we may reckon the seasons of private and domestic devotion,—and the sacred rest of the Sabbath, that wondrous provision of divine wisdom and mercy for withdrawing us from the concerns of time, and leading our thoughts to the things of eternity. We are too apt to lose sight of the real design and supreme importance of the Sabbath. We are too much disposed to consider the observance of it merely as a certain duty to be performed, and not to feel aright its unspeakable value, as a period given us for sacred thought,—as a mean of moral culture. Learn, then, to value the Sabbath;—esteem its exercises as the food of the soul,—as that which is intended to nourish you unto eternal life. To those who are laboriously occupied on other days, there is something pe-

culiarly and solemnly valuable in the evening of the Sabbath. You are not fatigued, as on other evenings, with the necessary labors of the day;—you have attended public ministrations of religion, which must have left some impression upon your mind, of the things which relate to your everlasting peace. Then is the time to retreat from all intrusion,—to shut your door,—to gather your family around you, and to contemplate yourself and them as passing through a scene of moral discipline to an eternal existence. Lose not the benefit of the precious moments;—take your children to your side,—fold them in the arms of parental affection,—and talk to them of that God who has appointed them their lot in this world, and from whose all-seeing eye nothing can hide them for a moment. Talk to them of their high destiny as immortal beings,—and of the great provision which is made in the gospel of Christ, for the nourishment and growth of the soul. Talk to them of this life which is hastening to a close, and of that eternal life which is never to end; and point out to them from

the word of God, the way to eternal peace. Gather them around you, and kneel before the throne of God,—seek his mercy and his grace, commit yourself and them to his guidance through life, and to the power of the Holy Spirit to prepare and purify you for the life which is to come. Thus shall you return to the labors, the cares, and the uncertainties of the world, with the high bearing of one who is pursuing a better portion than aught that the world can give. Thus shall your habitation, be the abode of happiness, of peace, and of love. Thus shall your children rise up to call you blessed. They shall go out from their father's house with impressions upon their minds of "things which are eternal,"—impressions calculated by the blessing of God, to preserve them from the evil that is in the world, and to lead them through the labors and anxieties of life, as heirs of immortality.

HARMONY OF CHRISTIAN FAITH

AND

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

"And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." 2 Peter i. 5, 6, 7.

In the style and composition of the sacred writings, nothing is more remarkable than the manner in which, by a few simple expressions, there is laid before us a detailed and harmonious display of Christian faith, and Christian character. In such expositions, each single word is often found to be a clear and distinct subject of contemplation in itself, while the combina-

tion is arranged with such consummate skill, yet simplicity and clearness, that it becomes at once a study for the philosopher in moral science, and a guide to the most humble Christian in his daily conduct through life. A beautiful example of this nature is furnished by the passage which we have placed at the head of this essay;—and, in its connection with the observations which go before it, taken along with the peculiar relation of its own component parts, it displays the foundation of Christian hope, and affords a delineation of Christian character, than which nothing can be conceived more harmonious or comprehensive.

This striking exhortation is addressed to those who profess to have received the truth respecting the divine character and atonement of the Messiah, and to rest their hope in the sight of God, on that great revelation of his mercy and grace which is contained in the

gospel of peace. The apostle expresses to them his earnest desire that they may grow in grace and in peace, founded upon the knowledge which they receive, in the gospel, of the character of God, as it is displayed in his Son; and he strikingly calls their attention to the provisions which are therein held out to them, so adapted to all their spiritual necessities: He reminds them that God has himself provided for them, in the gospel, all it is required for their spiritual life, and for their sanctification to his service; while he has enriched this message of mercy with "great and precious promises," calculated to bring them into a state of conformity to the nature of God, and to preserve them from the evil that is in the world through the degradation of the moral nature of man.

Having thus laid before them the ground of their hopes in the sight of God, and the

means provided for their progress in the divine life, he goes on to impress upon their attention those qualities of individual character, which every one, who is resting his hope upon this foundation, is called upon to cultivate with the most anxious care, as his great concern in his passage though this scene of moral discipline. He is required to "give all diligence" in this great work,—implying that, in the cultivation of this character, there is something to be done by an exercise of the mind itself. This is a truth which we are too apt to lose sight of, while, under a profession of our own weakness, we acknowledge our need of divine aid, but sit still in indolence, and await its coming. True it is, indeed, that without this aid we can do nothing; but it is not an impression which can come upon us without our consciousness, which a man may imagine that he feels, and then content himself with the ideal communi-

cation. It is a power which acts through the healthy operations of his own mind;—in the exercise of these, endeavoring, as a rational being, to regulate his thoughts and desires by a sense of the divine will, he is encouraged to expect its communication; and it is in feeling these, assuming the characters of moral health, that he has the evidence of its actual presence. "Give all diligence," therefore, says the apostle, in the cultivation of those qualities of character, which are the only evidence to yourselves or to others, that you are really interested in the gospel of peace. "Give diligence," he says again, "to make your calling and election sure." "Work out your own salvation," says another apostle, "with fear and trembling,"—having before you the encouragement of a strength and a might that is not in man, to carry you forward in the great undertaking,

"for God worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure."

A great and important truth which is clearly pointed out in such exhortations, is, that we have a certain power, not only over our conduct, but over the processes of our minds and the regulation of our thoughts;—and that, in the diligent exercise of this power, and a state of mental discipline arising out of it, we are encouraged to look for an influence from God, to enlighten our darkness, to give strength in our weakness, and to make us "more than conquerors" over all the difficulties and dangers which are before us in our progress to an eternal world. The subject is one of deep and extensive interest; the various important points of consideration which arise out of it could not be expressed in a more striking manner, than in the exhortation of the apostle,—"Giv-

ing all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity."

In attempting a brief illustration of a subject of such extent and importance, the first object of attention which meets us is,—that, in all this exhibition of moral qualities, the primary and fundamental principle is *Faith.*— This is at once the source of spiritual life, and the supporting element of moral health; and, until a man be firmly established in this great principle, it is vain for him to expect to make any progress in the cultivation of Christian character. When we thus consider faith as the source or primary moving cause, essential to the culture of every sound quality of the mind, and to every regulation of individual conduct, we have to view it in two aspects, in its relation

to truths regarding things not seen, and more especially and peculiarly in its relation to the offers or promises of the gospel of peace.

In considering the operation of faith in regard to the truths which relate to things not seen, we have to keep in mind the peculiarity of the situation in which we are placed in the present state of existence. In our connection with the things of the present world, we are surrounded by physical or material objects; with these we communicate by means of our bodily senses; they are continually obtruding themselves upon our attention, with little or no exertion of our own, and therefore they exercise over us a constant and extensive influence. But these are not our only relations:—as moral and responsible agents, as immortal beings, we have to do with objects as real as those which are presented to our senses, though of a very different nature. The truths

by which we ought to be influenced, respecting them, are addressed to a different part of our constitution, and are to be received upon a separate kind of evidence. They do not come under the cognizance of any of our senses, but are addressed directly to the mind; and their due influence upon us is produced through that mental process which we call faith. In the exercise of this important operation of the mind our first object is, by a process of judgment, to satisfy ourselves of the authenticity of the statements which are thus addressed to us; and this we do by an examination of the evidence on which they rest. When we are thus convinced of their truth, the farther operation of faith is to place them before us in such a manner, that they may exert the same kind of influence over us, as if the things believed were actually seen, or the events expected were taking place in our view. This corresponds with the defi-

nition given by the apostle: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;"—that is, faith is that exercise of the mind by which things which are future, but expected to take place, influence us as if they were present,—and things not seen, as if we saw them.

The truths which it is the office of faith thus to place before us with all the vividness of present existence, are those which relate to the character and perfections of God,—the great concerns of a world unseen,—and the awful realities of a future judgment, and a state of endless being. When these overwhelming truths are really believed, and the thoughts are consequently directed to them in a degree at all proportioned to their momentous importance,—the mind is in the exercise of faith; and its operation is to keep the truths before us as regulating principles in the mental

economy,—and governing principles in the whole character and conduct. It causes them to exercise the same kind of influence over us as if they were objects of sense,—as if the Deity in all the splendor of his attributes were disclosed to our view, or as if we were present at the dread hour in which he shall appear in all his sublime and terrible majesty as a righteous judge.

Now, in this important process of the mind, it is impossible not to be struck with the consideration of how much appears to belong to ourselves, in the exercise of our powers as rational beings. The truths are revealed, and their evidence is before us; but the due attention to them must be entirely our own. It is ours to examine the evidence by which these important truths are supported; and, being satisfied of their reality, it is an exercise of our own minds, to direct our thoughts to them in such a manner, or to keep them so before the mind

that they may exert their due influence over our whole character. The man who, in every action of life, thus bears upon his mind an habitual sense of the divine presence, and an realizing impression of an eternal world, is he who lives by faith. Such a character is strikingly contrasted with the conduct of those who live by sense,—who are influenced only by the things which they see around them, and devote their supreme attention to objects and pursuits which they are soon to leave for ever.

Such is the operation of faith in regard to truth; we have next to attend to its agency respecting the offers or promises of the Gospel. This great revelation of peace is addressed to us as beings in a state of condemnation and of impurity, from which we have no power to deliver ourselves. For the one it reveals a dispensation of mercy, in which, with perfect consistency with all the attributes of his cha-

racter, the Deity offers a free forgiveness; for the other, is promised an influence from himself, capable of renewing the moral nature of man, and of raising him again to the image of God. The benefits, thus freely promised, are offered to every one that believes;—and who is he that believes?—he who is convinced of his guilt, and perceives his moral necessities; —who feels that he is incapable of delivering himself from their power; who is satisfied of the efficacy of the offered deliverance,—and confides in the faithfulness or sincerity of him who offers it;—this is he who believes;—such faith is said in the Scriptures to be the gift of God, and through this faith a man is saved;—for, acting upon the impression of the truths thus believed, he asks an interest in these offered blessings, and throws himself upon the faithfulness of God for a participation in the full benefits of redemption.

When, under the influence of the mental impressions which have been thus briefly referred to, a man has been led to seek an interest in the provisions of the Gospel, he enters upon a new course of existence, the leading character of which is,—that it is founded upon, and maintained by faith. Believing his guilt, and confiding in the sincerity of God in a free offer of pardon, he seeks an interest in the blessings of redemption, for his reconciliation to God. Believing his moral depravity and helplessness, he seeks continued communications of grace and strength, for his growing sanctification and his progressive advancement in the divine life. Believing the actual existence of things future and things unseen, he feels upon his mind their habitual influence,—the presence and the perfections of God, and all the realities of an eternal world. Thus he both lives, and walks by faith;—his faith is the

source of his spiritual life, and it is the great means of his daily progress.

It is to those who profess to have entered upon this life of faith, that the striking exhortation of the apostle is addressed,—pointing out to them, at once, the graces of the Christian character which they are called upon to cultivate with "all diligence,"—and the means by which they may be enabled to advance with success in this great undertaking.

I. He exhorts them, in the first place, Add to your faith, *Virtue.*

The word which is usually translated virtue, is well known to imply, in its original and strict signification, fortitude. In its connection in this passage, it appears to mean simply a firmness and consistency of mind, in reference to the truths which are the objects of faith,—a determination to contemplate them steadily in

all their tendencies,—and a habitual effort to keep them before the mind, so that they may become regulating principles in the whole conduct. It includes, therefore, an earnest endeavor to cultivate that character and conduct which the truths so believed are calculated to produce in every one who really believes them. This is the first great step in that mental exercise which constitutes living by faith; and it cannot be too strongly impressed upon us, how much it is a process of the mind, of which every one must be conscious who really performs it. From the want of it we see such inconsistencies of character in those who profess to believe the most important truths, and who really think they believe them. They have, it may be, directed some attention to the evidence of the truths, and have yielded a certain assent of the understanding to their reality,—but this conviction has not been followed up by that

necessary process of the mind which is calculated to bring the truths into practical operation upon the moral condition;—they have neglected entirely the exhortation to add to their faith virtue.

This important exercise of the mind must be in habitual and active operation in him who desires to live by faith. The things of time and sense, with which we are continually surrounded, exert over us a constant influence; and it requires a peculiar and intense direction of the mind, to withdraw us from their power, and to cause us to feel, as we ought, the influence of events which are future, and of things which are not seen. It requires this exercise to be in a state of peculiar activity, when we are called upon to act under the impression of these future and unseen things, in opposition to present feelings and present interests, and in circumstances, it may be, in which this has to

be done by great exertion, and great personal sacrifice. When a man does thus resist the strongest inducements of present things, and sacrifices the strongest personal feelings, propensities, and interests, under simple impressions of things which are future and unseen; —and when he exhibits, in his whole deportment, a character guided by these impressions, to the overcoming of present feelings and personal interests, whenever they happen to interfere with each other,—this is to live by faith, —and this is to add to his faith virtue.

Such, in a remarkable degree, was the conduct of Noah. Warned of God that the world was to be destroyed by water, and instructed to prepare an ark for the preservation of his household, he promptly commenced this formidable undertaking, and persevered in it through a long course of years, with unshrinking steadiness. During this protracted period, he had

not only to undergo much severe labor, but, in the prosecution of it, must have withdrawn himself from many engagements, and denied himself many indulgences which present feelings and interests would have rendered highly desirable. Besides all this, we must suppose, that he had to encounter, day after day, the derision and insults of the ungodly around him, added, most probably, to the earnest remonstrances of those who called themselves his friends, against wasting his life in so unprofitable a labor. But these insults, privations, and remonstrances were alike disregarded by this distinguished man of faith, while he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible, and persevered in his work, under the firm and undeviating conviction, that what God had said he would certainly perform. Thus does he exhibit a wonderful example of that character which is founded upon and maintained by faith;—and

thus has he left us a striking pattern of acting on his faith with unshrinking determination and fortitude, in opposition to every impulse from present things,—or, in the language of the apostle, of adding to his faith virtue.

And thus will it be with every one who really lives under the power of faith,—that is, who feels upon his mind the due influence of the truths which he believes, respecting things future and unseen. This wondrous principle, when cultivated as the regulating power in the whole character, elevates the man above present feelings,—and carries him into a region where new objects are presented to his view, and pursuits of a new and superior order engage his attention, and meet his enlarged desires. He is raised to "Mount Zion, the city of the living God, to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect,—to God the judge of all,—and Jesus

the mediator of the new covenant,—and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Thence returning to the humble concerns of the present world, and all his engagements among perishing things, he feels their unsatisfying character, and learns to pass through them under the habitual impression, that this is not his rest, nor here his portion. Giving all diligence to add to his faith virtue, it will be his endeavor, by earnest meditation and prayer, to keep the impression of these truths habitually before his view, so that they may alike influence the habits of his mind, and show this influence in every part of his conduct. The sublime conceptions, produced on the mind of such a man, respecting the character of God, will be peculiarly powerful, when contemplating him as he is revealed in his Son. In that great message of mercy and of peace, he has been taught to

seek his only hope of reconciliation to God,—as well as his only means of making progress in the divine life. Acting under the powerful influence of these great objects of faith, he will derive from them a continual and lively motive to love and new obedience,—knowing that "he is not his own, but bought with a price," and that he is under the most powerful obligations to live, not to himself, but to Him who died for him and rose again. Thus, cultivating with anxious care an immediate feeling of the character and perfections of God, the man of faith seeks to keep this impression habitually before him as the directing principle of his life, and to have every emotion and every desire, and consequently every part of his conduct, regulated by a sense of the divine will. All this important process of moral discipline, we must repeat, is closely connected with an exercise of the mind, of which every one must

be conscious who really performs it. This consists, as we have seen, in a strong and habitual direction of the thoughts to those truths which are the objects of faith, so that their power shall enter into every feeling of the mind. At first, the exercise may require an effort, and habitual watchfulness may be necessary to prevent the distracting influence of the things of sense. But, like every habit, it becomes easier by repetition and perseverance, until, under the influence of a power that is not in man, it settles down into the uniform, consistent conduct of one, who endures as seeing him who is invisible,—and, amid the cares, anxieties, and distractions of life, gives all diligence to add to his faith virtue.

That discipline of the mind, which thus brings it under the habitual influence of the truths which are the objects of faith, has well received from the apostles the name of forti-

tude or virtue. For a high degree of moral courage is required for commencing it, and a high tone of moral determination is necessary for carrying it forward with effect. The first great step towards it, is that most difficult of all exercises of the mind which consists of seriously looking within. It is easy to investigate doctrines, and to weigh evidences; and there is a delightful sense of intellectual vigor in detecting error, and exposing sophistry, and demonstrating the triumph of truth. It is comparatively easy also, and it is delightful to a regulated mind, to rise above the events of ordinary life, and to ascend, in exalted contemplation, to those higher regions, where shine forth in a peculiar manner the divine perfections,—to luxuriate amid the wonders of creation, the wonders of providence, and, it may be also, the mysteries of grace. But, after the mind has been disciplined to these high pursuits, a more

difficult exercise remains,—and that is to look within, and determinedly to press the question respecting our own moral condition, and how far we are under the influence of the truths which we profess to believe. It is to search out the very worst concerning ourselves, and steadily to contemplate the truth so discovered in all its important bearings upon our prospects for eternity. Do I believe the omniscience and omnipresence of Him, who is not only the witness of my conduct, but who tries even the thoughts of my heart, by the high and holy standard of his law, then is my moral condition within, such as will bear the inspection of that eye? Do I believe in the solemnities of a coming judgment, in which a strict account shall be required, and the secrets of all hearts revealed;—when my whole moral history is then displayed, and this account required of me,—what shall I answer? Such a course of

rigid scrutiny is the first great step in that moral process, in which consists the health of the soul. When a man has determinedly nerved himself for the work, and has resolved that nothing shall shake him from its stern and rigid accomplishment, this is to add to his faith virtue.

II. That this discipline of the mind, so essential to the health of every moral being, may be conducted upon right principles, it is necessary to pay minute attention to the truth and soundness of those opinions which are thus received as objects of faith, and adopted as regulating principles in the character. Therefore, continues the apostle, to your faith and virtue, add *knowledge*. This is a consideration of the utmost importance, which, though it may be recognised in theory, is less attended to in practice than it ought to be. Whatever is received

as the object of faith must first be presented to the mind as the object of knowledge; that is, it must be received only upon full examination, and upon such evidence as is sufficient to convince the understanding of its truth. Without this, the professed belief must be either some vague generality, unworthy of the character of truth, or some vision of the mind itself, which leads only to enthusiasm,—it is not faith.

On this subject various errors are committed, but all of them are of serious moment. One of the most common, perhaps, is indifference. Men, who do not profess to disbelieve the great truths relating to things not seen, are at no pains to study and examine them. With what eager attention do we find them applying to interesting questions in politics, trade, or science;—seeking intensely after accurate knowledge, and directing all the energies of their mind towards arriving at the whole truth. But

with what coolness do they apply to those inquiries which most of all concern them. In these they are satisfied with some vague and general notions, which perhaps they have been taught in their youth, or which they have adopted from others, without feeling the supreme importance of making themselves fully acquainted with the truth;—of forming distinct and clear opinions, and of perceiving distinctly the grounds on which these opinions are formed;—of being satisfied whether their belief is consistent with truth, and whether it embraces the whole truth, on those great questions in which are involved their hopes and prospects for a life that is to come.

Others affect to disbelieve these great truths, and to consider them, perhaps as the superstition of vulgar minds; and they seem to think it a proof of superior understanding to treat them with contempt, or even with ridicule. Do

we ask such persons for some account of that long, and laborious, and serious course of inquiry, by which they have arrived at this conclusion on a question of such momentous importance, we must not press them too closely for an answer. We shall find that they have scarcely examined them at all. They have allowed their minds to be carried away by some trivial objection or some fanciful sophism; and truths which received the cordial assent of Newton, and of many others distinguished by understandings of the highest order, are often dismissed by the most frivolous minds as altogether unworthy of belief. This affectation of scepticism is as contemptible as it is melancholy. It is not the result of calm investigation, but the rash decision of a distorted and prejudiced mind, which is turned aside by its own partial views, widely at variance with sound inquiry; or which, misled by its moral condition, has

argued itself into the belief of what it wishes to be true. For, in many who have become the victims of vain and sophistical opinions, the will evidently takes the lead in the mental process, and opinions are seized upon with avidity and embraced as truth, which have recommended themselves to previously existing inclinations of the heart. This is a principle in the philosophy of human nature, of most intense and solemn interest. For when the desires of the heart have once departed from a full approbation of the purity of the divine law, the course is easy by which the mind frames for itself a system in accordance with its own disordered inclinations, and after a certain process, comes to rest in that system as truth. In both cases, the unbelief arises not from deficiency of evidence, but from a total want of that condition of the mind without which the best evidence has no power,—"if

they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

There are persons of a third class, who, professing a sincere love for the truth, wander from it by their own speculations, and by neglecting that calm and deliberate application of the mind which is required for adding to their faith knowledge. It is thus that, in all ages, men have deluded themselves, and led others astray, by putting vague conceptions in the place of truth. To every one who would preserve himself from such delusions, the great and solemn object of inquiry ought to be, upon what ground his opinions have been formed;—have they been deduced from a full and candid investigation,—and do they rest on such evidence as is sufficient to satisfy a sound understanding that they are true? We have an interesting but melancholy picture of human nature, when

we endeavor to trace the principles by which minds of a serious character are influenced, in thus departing from the simplicity of the truth. In some it would appear to arise from a love of singularity, or a desire of appearing wiser than their neighbors; in others, from an ambition to be wise above what is written, accompanied generally with a restless activity of mind, and vividness of imagination, while there has been very little cultivation of the judgment. The peculiarity in the actual mental condition of such persons is, that they look only to one view of a question. Having formed their opinions, probably on slight and feeble grounds, their whole ingenuity is directed to finding arguments in support of them, instead of rigidly examining their truth; and they do not allow themselves to consider fairly the objections or the views and principles which are opposed to their own. This habit of the mind

is usually accompanied with a high confidence in its own powers, and a contempt for those who differ; and the persons who are under its influence generally become, in a great measure, inaccessible to argument, and almost unsusceptible of the force of facts and considerations which are opposed to their favorite views. This arises from the habit of directing their attention entirely to one view of a subject, or to one side of a question, while they put away from them all that is opposed to it. For when false opinions have once been allowed to fasten on the mind, the evil is not confined to the particular dogma which is embraced; but an injury has been done to the mental economy, which is apt to continue, or even to increase, and to carry the individual more and more deeply into error and delusion. When a man of a certain activity of mind, and energy of character, has thus framed for himself a system

differing in some prominent manner from the established opinions of those around him, the facility is equally remarkable with which he finds zealous proselytes. These appear, in general, to be influenced by principles similar to those which have been referred to. There is a feeling of intellectual superiority in appearing to think more deeply or more acutely than others; in pursuing discoveries beyond the reach of ordinary minds,—in standing with the enlightened few, apart from the multitude who are content to tread the beaten path which their fathers trode before them. Such a feeling influences the judgment in a manner which will not be admitted by those who most strongly manifest its power; it does so chiefly by a misdirection of the attention,—that is, by leading them to consider only their favorite system, without paying any regard to the considerations which might show it to be fallacious.

For preserving from all such perversions of the understanding, and that pernicious influence on the whole moral economy which follows, the only security is in a close attention to the apostle's exhortation, that to faith be added knowledge. For this purpose, the utmost care must be habitually exercised, that the mind be calmly and steadily directed to an examination of the truth, and the utmost anxiety felt to prevent it from wandering into partial views, or speculations guided by favorite fancies. Such is the discipline of a mind which seeks the truth in the love of it; and, in the prosecution of its inquiries, conducted with humility and candor, it is encouraged to look for an influence from heaven, which will preserve it from error, and prove to it strength, and light, and wisdom.

Though it thus appears that all true faith must be founded on knowledge, there is a pe-

culiar propriety and beauty in the order in which the mental operations are stated by the apostle,—first faith,—then virtue,—and then knowledge. For, the first step in this great mental process, is that frame or disposition of mind, in which it is open to receive the truth in simplicity and candor,—to take a full view of all its parts, and to give full weight to all its evidences;—and with an earnest determination to apply it to all those purposes which it ought to answer in the regulation of the whole character. When, with such a disposition of mind, the attention is directed to a diligent inquiry after the particular truths, the individual is in that state of discipline in which he is most likely to prosecute the momentous inquiry with success. He is so, according to the established laws of the mind, by which such a sincere and candid love of truth naturally leads to the discovery of it in every department

of knowledge. But, besides this, in the search after divine truth, a special direction is promised to the sincere and humble mind. This appears to be the condition, so often referred to in the scriptures, as receiving the truth "as a little child;" and it appears to be that which is intended by our Lord, when he says, "if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrines whether they be of God." Such a man enters on the great inquiry with a deep feeling of its momentous importance, and a sincere and simple desire to discover the whole truth; —and he adds to this an earnest determination to press home each truth to all its consequences on his own moral condition,—to take it as the guide of his life, and the regulating principle in the moral economy of his heart and of his mind;—this is he who adds to his faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge.

The mental attributes which have been referred to in the preceding observations, consisting of faith, virtue, and knowledge, may be considered as those which form the foundation of Christian character; but they are the foundation only, not the real structure of which that character consists. From the consideration of them, therefore, we are naturally led to that influence which they ought to produce upon the moral feelings of the mind, and the regulation of the whole character and conduct, without which knowledge is vain, and faith is barren. This most important part of the subject is divided by the apostle into two branches;—the one relating to the moral condition of the individual himself, consisting of temperance, patience, and godliness;—the other having respect to his conduct to his fellow-men, in brotherly kindness and charity. All these qualities are required to be in constant and har-

monious operation to constitute a healthy moral condition; and there is either self-deception, or a pretension of what is not really felt, where there is the appearance or profession of some of them without the harmony of the whole. Though a man may show much conduct having the characters of brotherly-kindness and charity, their is a radical error in the mental economy if these are not founded upon faith and knowledge,—and accompanied by temperance, patience, and godliness. And, whatever display there may be of knowledge, and whatever profession of faith and godliness, these are but empty names, unless they are accompanied by temperance and patience, and lead to brotherly-kindness and charity.

III. Therefore, continues the apostle, as the first great result of your faith, virtue and knowledge, add *Temperance.*

In ascertaining the precise meaning of such an expression as this, derived from an ancient language, our proper course appears to be, to refer to the meaning affixed to it by ancient writers who wrote in the same language. When we do so, in regard to this expression, we find that the ancient writers on moral science attached great importance to a distinction which they made between temperance and continence. By continence they expressed the mental condition of a man who has irregular desires or inclinations, but does not yield to the gratification of them;—by temperance, the condition of him whose desires and inclinations themselves are under due regulation and control. When we assume this, therefore, as the ancient and precise meaning of the term, a subject is opened to us of great extent and supreme importance;—the purification of the heart. It is most appropriately placed where

it stands in the enumeration of moral qualities before us, as the first step in that great moral process, in which consists the health of the soul. Faith, virtue, and knowledge are the means,—and these constitute mental exercises which may be called intellectual. Brotherly-kindness and charity, again, express attributes of character in a man's conduct towards his fellow-men. But between these there is placed a class of moral qualities, in which consists his own sound condition as a moral being,—and on which depends the aspect in which he is viewed in the sight of him who "looketh on the heart;"—these are enumerated by the apostle under the heads of temperance, patience, and godliness. Among the three classes of qualities, however, there is a close and most important relation. Faith, virtue, and knowledge, we have seen, are connected with processes of the mind, over which we have a certain de-

gree of voluntary power, and in the due exercise of them much depends upon this power being exerted in a steady and persevering manner. The result of this is to bring us under the agency of certain truths, relating to things not seen, which have a direct tendency, under divine influence, to produce most important effects upon the moral condition of our own minds and hearts. When this great end has been accomplished, a certain conduct and character follow, not by any distinct and separate effort, but as a natural and indispensable consequence:—the tree being made good, the fruit will be good,—the fountain being purified, the water will be pure.

The consideration of temperance, therefore, leads us to a subject of the deepest importance, —the regulation of the heart; the cultivation of a pure and healthy state of the desires, affections, and dispositions of the mind, those

principles within, from which our external conduct and character proceed. "Keep thy heart," says an inspired writer, "with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." "Out of the heart," says our Lord himself, "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

The subject must be one of supreme importance in the estimation of every man who feels what that is which constitutes a state of moral purity in the eye of God. Man can judge of man by his external character alone, but "the Lord looketh on the heart;" and there may be much of irregular desire, unsubdued passion, and impure imagination within, which are not allowed to show themselves in the conduct. There are various principles by which this may be accounted for. In restraining the conduct of man, much is done by the influence of human laws,—much by a regard to health

and interest—and much more still by our regard to the opinions of other men, our desire of their approbation and esteem, our fear of their contempt, indignation, or anger;—very much by a regard to character,—a principle of most extensive operation with all descriptions and classes of men. There may even be a certain operation of conscience, or a conviction of what is morally right and wrong, contending with an unsound inclination within, and restraining the outward conduct, while the desire is still cherished, and the envious passion, or impure imagination, still holds its place in the heart. But, if we really believe that every desire and imagination of the heart is open to the eye of God, we cannot for a moment suppose that this can be in his estimation a sound moral condition. To constitute moral purity, the heart must be pure; the desires and inclinations of the mind, and our affections or dispositions to-

wards God and towards man, must, equally with our external conduct, be regulated by the indications of conscience, and by a supreme regard to the divine will. The habitual direction of the thoughts should be such as recognises the inspection of infinite purity. When the Psalmist, accordingly, prays the Eternal One to scrutinize minutely his moral condition, it is by saying, "Search me and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

But a mind, which is not the slave either of impure desire or malignant passion, may be devoted to pursuits which relate only to present things,—to wealth,—to power,—to distinction,—or may be allowed to waste itself in the mere frivolities and trifles of the passing hour. A sound condition of the heart and of the mind requires not only the absence of unsound and

irregular emotions, but the careful culture of those which are worthy of our high destiny as immortal beings. It leads us to seek after spiritual blessings and moral acquirements, to "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth;" it calls us to the cultivation of kind and benevolent feelings towards men, and of love, submission and devotedness towards God, —of a habitual desire to feel the impression of his presence, and to have every action of life, and every desire and emotion of the mind, regulated by the sense of his holiness and purity. It leads us to direct our minds with a suitable degree of attention, to the various duties and responsibilities which belong to the particular situation in which we are placed, and the means and opportunities of usefulness which are committed to us; our high responsibilities as parents and as children,—as masters or servants,—as subjects, as neighbors, and

friends,—as possessed of talents which ought to be devoted to the glory of God,—or of wealth, in regard to which we must render to him a strict account of our stewardship. And finally, it leads us to feel all the deep responsibility of that culture of the soul, which alone can qualify and prepare it for the enjoyment of God.

The cultivation of a state of mind which feels, as it ought, such impressions as these, is closely connected with a most important principle in our mental constitution,—the power which we have over the regulation and direction of our thoughts. We feel that we possess such a power, however imperfectly we may exercise it. We can direct the thoughts to any subject we please; we can continue them intensely directed to it, so as to follow out the train of thinking to which it gives rise; and we can vary or dismiss it at our will. But this

requires a certain effort, especially in those who have been little accustomed to close and serious thinking. Without this effort, we leave the mind to be occupied only with passing events, or to frame for its own amusement vain delusions and phantoms of the imagination, no better than dreams, and as unprofitable. The due control and regulation of this power over our thoughts lies at the foundation of all true mental culture, and there is nothing that makes a more essential difference between one man and another than a due regulation of the thoughts, and the subject to which they are habitually directed. In all men, indeed, there are various subjects to which the thoughts must be directed, in the ordinary concerns of life; and these must occupy a great degree of attention in persons who may differ widely from each other in the regulation of the mind. But there are, to all, seasons of leisure from these

concerns, in which the mind seeks relief in some other occupation. It is then that a man may read in his own thoughts both his intellectual and his moral condition ; and, if he then attend to the habits of his mind, with an earnest desire to know the truth, he will find a monitor within which will never deceive him.

It is true, indeed, that a due regulation of the thoughts does not alone constitute a sound moral condition ; but they are closely and immediately connected. Correct and pure moral emotions towards God, and a pure and healthy state of moral feeling in our own mental discipline in general, are conditions of the mind over which we have no direct control ; that is, we cannot call them up at our will. But, by the constitution of the mind, they are the natural result of certain truths, and they are called forth by a proper direction of the attention to those truths, so that their natural effects may

be produced upon the moral feelings. In making this statement we lose not sight of the important fact, that the influence of the Spirit of God is required to bring home these truths with effect to the mind which has never felt their power. But we abuse this important doctrine, when we talk of it in a manner which turns aside our view from the power which we possess over our own minds, and the deep and solemn responsibility which attaches to every man in the due exercise of it;—the deep guilt which may be incurred by a neglect of adequate attention to the truths which are calculated to influence the moral condition of the mind, and, through it, to regulate the whole character. However much we want the inclination to exercise it, we feel that we have the power. We can direct our thoughts intensely and seriously to God,—can contemplate his power and wisdom, his purity and his holiness, and all the solemnities of

an eternal world and a judgment to come. We can consider seriously the various responsibilities and duties which belong to our own condition in life, and can rigidly question ourselves, whether we are discharging them in a manner which will bear the light of an eternal day. We can, in the same manner, look within, and strictly question ourselves respecting our moral condition in the sight of him who searches our hearts, and knows our inmost thoughts. We can thus cherish trains of thinking which have a tendency to promote correct feelings of the mind, and we can avoid or banish such as have an opposite tendency. We can study with diligence the word of God, and contemplate deliberately and carefully the various important truths which are there disclosed to us and their tendencies both for the regulation of our minds and the guidance of our conduct. This process of the mind, indeed, requires a

steady and persevering effort, and unceasing watchfulness; and every one who seriously enters upon the great undertaking will feel continually his own weakness, and his need of a power that is not in himself. But while he humbly and earnestly seeks for this almighty power to enlighten his darkness, and, in his weakness, to give strength, let him not forget the part which is his own,—let him not lose sight of the full import of the apostle's exhortation, calling upon him to "give all diligence," that to his faith, virtue, and knowledge, he may add temperance.

IV. From the whole mental condition which has been referred to in the preceding observations, another naturally arises, which, in fact, is nearly allied to it;—to temperance must be added *Patience*. This, considered as a quality of individual character, seems to imply a state

of mind which may be viewed in its important influence, both in reference to God and to our relations to our fellow-men. In reference to God, it implies not only a submission to, but a cordial acquiescence in, the dispensations of his providence, as parts of a great system carried forward by infinite wisdom, and calculated to answer important purposes in his great scheme of moral government. It leads us thus to rest in the absolute conviction, that the whole economy of providence is one great and magnificent system of design, and order, and harmony. The mental tranquillity arising from this conviction will be felt, both in relation to our own concerns, and to those which are going on in the world around us. In regard to the former, it leads us to rest in a sense of our being in the hand of a Father, infinite in wisdom as in goodness and mercy, who has appointed us the place we are to occupy in this

state of moral discipline,—and in the assurance that it is the one best suited to promote his great purposes, and our own eternal good. We are thus taught to consider the peculiar duties which belong to our lot, and how we may best glorify God in it, rather than to compare it with the lot of others, and thus discover sources of discontent. Even the anxieties and troubles of life we are taught to regard with similar feelings, knowing that, if used as a mean of moral discipline, they are conducive to our highest improvement,—that tribulation, viewed and improved in this manner, "worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and that this hope maketh not ashamed." The peace arising from this condition of the mind should also be experienced in reference to the events which are taking place in the world around us. Though "the heathen should rage, and the people imagine a

vain thing," it directs us to a hand which controls their movements; and, even when events assume their most alarming aspect, we are still led to contemplate the operation of that hand with humble confidence, and to rest in the assurance that "the Lord reigneth."

The mental condition, which is referable to patience, has also a most important relation to a man's intercourse with his fellow-men. It is nearly synonymous with meekness, and closely allied to humility, and all the graces of character which spring from it. It leads a man to form a moderate estimate of his own rights and pretensions, and to take the most enlarged estimate of the rights and feelings of other men. It leads him to be low to take offence—to put the best construction on the conduct and motives of others,—to seek peace, and often to submit to injuries rather than violate it. Such a disposition has its reward in itself;—the man

who possesses it passes quietly through life, borne far above all its lesser disturbances and evils, by his habitual sense of those great concerns which relate to the life which is to come.

V. In this striking enumeration of the qualities of Christian character, we have seen that temperance and patience relate to the internal moral condition of the man. But there is most appropriately placed in immediate connection with them that mental exercise by which they are promoted and cherished. Faith, virtue, and knowledge are of no value, unless they be productive of temperance and patience,—but these essential qualities cannot be maintained in growth and progress without *Godliness*.—Wherefore, says the apostle, to your temperance and patience add godliness.

We read in scripture of those who live without God in the world,—that is, without

any impression of his character,—without any sense of his presence,—without any regard to his law,—without any gratitude for his goodness,—and without any feeling of their dependence upon him both for mercy and for spiritual strength. We read of others, who think of God as such an one as themselves,—that is, bringing down his high and holy attributes to a conformity with their own degraded moral feelings. The state of mind, here designated by the term godliness, seems to be that which is opposed to both these conditions. It implies forming high and worthy conceptions of the divine character,—and habitually cherishing these as the regulating principle of our own moral condition. The attributes of God indeed are far above our full comprehension. They are higher than heaven, what can we do; —they are deeper than hell, what can we know; —the measure of them is longer than the earth

and broader than the sea;—who by searching can find out God. But, from his works, and from his word, we can derive such a knowledge of him as is sufficient for all the purposes of our guidance, direction, and comfort, in this our state of moral discipline. From his works around us we trace his power and wisdom, and should learn to bow in humble adoration before him who called all things into being by his word, and maintains them all in undeviating harmony. From the moral impressions of our own minds, or, in other words, in the light of conscience, we may read his perfections as a being of infinite holiness, and righteousness, and truth. All these impressions are confirmed and illustrated by his revealed word, where, in addition to those great and overwhelming attributes of his character, we learn his perfections as a God of love,—long-suffering and slow to anger,—not willing the death of a sinner,

but that he turn from his wickedness and live. We learn the wondrous provision which he has made for the recovery of his lost creatures; and are led to throw ourselves before his throne of mercy, seeking his pardon, and his grace to help us in every time of need; seeking that strength which he has promised to every one that asks it, to carry us forward in our state of trial and discipline, and to prepare and purify us for the immediate enjoyment of himself.

He who feels upon his mind such impressions of the divine character, and cultivates them in a manner in any degree adequate to their supreme importance, will naturally seek after intercourse with God,—will desire to feel the influence of his continual presence,—and to cherish the sense of his holiness as the regulating principle of his character, and even of the desires and imaginations of the heart. He will find increasing delight in contemplating

the perfections of God. He will desire to commit himself, with filial confidence and love, to the disposal of his heavenly Father, and to make his will the habitual rule of his whole conduct;—he will look to his mercy as the only ground of safety, and to his grace as the only source of spiritual strength, and the only means of progress in those great concerns which pertain to an immortal being. Thus will he "dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, —to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

The disposition of mind which we have thus considered, as being included under the term godliness, may be the habitual exercise of the duly regulated mind. But there are certain special means by which it is encouraged and promoted; and the chief of these is prayer.—Not that the Eternal Omniscient One requires to be informed either of our wants or our de-

sires. All our necessities are better known to him than they are to ourselves; and the most secret thoughts and inclinations of the heart are naked and open before him. But he has specially appointed the exercise of prayer as a mean of communication with himself, and through which he is pleased to dispense the blessings of his grace. In addition to these considerations, the exercise of prayer is calculated to bring a special and peculiar benefit to ourselves. In the midst of our ordinary engagements in life, indeed, we may elevate the soul to God; but, surrounded by the distractions of external things, this must be done in a partial and unsatisfactory manner. Our feeble and imperfect nature, so much under the influence of the objects of sense, requires every possible aid to enable us to feel the due impression of the things of faith. It requires us to withdraw from external things, and in solitude and

silence, and by solemn acts of devotion, to bring ourselves, as it were, into the immediate presence of God. There is a power in the mind by which it thus brings down upon itself an influence from the inner sanctuary, a special impression of the perfections of that incomprehensible One, who is thus disclosed to us, as if by his more immediate presence. We realize his omniscient eye, and stand in awe under the truth, that he understandeth our thoughts afar off. We feel the impression of his holiness, and bow beneath the sense of our own depravity and guilt. We feel the influence of his love, and throw ourselves upon his mercy. We commit ourselves to his grace to supply all our wants out of his fulness,—to conduct us in safety through the dangers, the difficulties, and the evils of life, and to carry us forward in the course which leads to eternal peace. Would we seek to know our own moral condition, and to fix the deep

impression of an inquiry of such eternal importance, we cannot use a mean of greater efficacy, than putting it into words, in the presence of Him, to whom it is better known than it is to ourselves. Is there any mental or moral habit which we feel to have acquired a mastery that puts in peril the safety of the soul, we cannot assail it in a more efficient manner, than by fully confessing it before Him who seeth in secret, and asking from him a might which alone is able to rescue us from its power. Such is the province, and such the efficacy of prayer. It maintains our intercourse with things which are not seen. It is the life, the strength, and the nourishment of the soul; and it will be diligently cultivated, not as a mere duty to be performed, but as a mean of spiritual life, by every one who feels the deep import of the truth, that all the graces of the Christian character must be founded upon and supported by godliness.

VI. The mental condition, which has been referred to in the preceding observations, does not waste itself in monkish solitude, or even in the exercise of sublime contemplation. It tends at once to lead the man who is the subject of it to the relation in which he stands to his fellow-men, and to the various important duties which belong to the situation in which he is placed. While it leads him to seek after purity of heart, it also produces a character and conduct calculated to promote the good of others,—the happiness and comfort of all those with whom he may be brought into contact, in his passage through this state of trial and discipline. Following out this, as the natural or necessary result of a healthy moral condition within, the apostle next inculcates, that to temperance, patience and godliness, is to be added *Brotherly-kindness.* This seems to include the highest exercise of all those affections which bind man

to his fellow-men; leading us to feel towards each other as brethren,—to study the wants of others,—to enter into their feelings, and, in as far as we have power, to relieve their distresses. It tends to promote a conduct distinguished not only by the highest degree of integrity, but by habitual complaisance, sympathy, and kindness; and this is not to be regulated by the condition of men as to the things of this world, but by the high and broad principle, that, whatever may be their lot as to external things, they are the children of the same Almighty Father with ourselves, inheriting the same nature, possessed of the same feelings, and soon to enter on the same state of eternal existence, when all the distinctions which exist in this world shall cease for ever. It thus leads us to bring ourselves, as it were, to the same rank and the same situation with them, and with a brotherly interest to view their wants and their feelings as if they

were our own. The principles of conduct which arise from this interchange of tender affections is applicable to every situation of life, and to all those exercises of justice, benevolence, forbearance, and friendship, which may be called forth by our various relations to our fellow-men. It sets aside those artificial distinctions by which, on the principles of the world, men are kept at such a distance from each other; and it sets aside, what is more powerful still, the principle of selfishness, by which men are made so acutely alive to every thing that concerns their own wants and their own feelings, and so cool in what relates to the wants and feelings of others. It goes farther still; for, according to the sublime maxims of the gospel, it teaches us even to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them who despitefully use us. The benevolence of the gospel thus raises us above the highest principles

to which we are led by the mere feeling of human kindness;—it leads to do good to the evil and the unthankful, and this is impressed upon us by the highest of all motives—the imitation of him who is the Giver of all good. Such a character is exemplified, in the most striking manner, in the whole life of Him, who for us, and for our salvation, humbled himself and became a man of sorrows. He humbled himself that he might mingle with mankind,—that he might enter into their wants,—that he might know their feelings,—that, having suffered being tempted, he might succor them that are tempted. He has left us an example that we should follow his steps; and he has left us precise instructions respecting the course by which this may be done, and the objects whom he has specially committed to our care. These are the hungry, the naked, the stranger, the sick, and the prisoner. He has even left us the

solemn intimation, that, at the last and great day of account, our moral condition will be estimated by the actual influence which has been habitually manifested in our relations to our fellow-men, as done from a principle of love to him and of devotedness to his service. While we retire, therefore, from the influence of external things, and devote ourselves to the high undertaking which relates to the culture of the moral being within, while we feel the supreme importance of cultivating temperance, patience, and godliness, as the qualities which are essential to our own moral condition, let us constantly bear in mind that the direct tendency of these is to lead us forth to our fellow-men, to seek them in their hour of need, to minister to their wants, to relieve their distresses, to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the wanderer, to soothe the wounded spirit. For this exalted exercise wealth is not necessary; the humblest

of those who breathe the spirit of the Redeemer, may show much kindness and do much good to others as humble as themselves.

But it is not in the abodes of poverty and deprivation alone that the kindly feelings of the heart may be called into exercise. In every situation of life we may find openings for deeds of kindness. In every rank, and in every relation, this disposition will manifest itself by gentleness and forbearance, by leading us to study the feelings and consult the wants and the desires of others, whether superiors, equals, or dependants; by repressing selfishness, and by producing the habit of placing ourselves in the situation of others, so as to make their feelings and circumstances our own. Hence arise the sympathies and exertions of Christian friendship, and the habit of sacrificing personal feelings and selfish interests, with all that interchange of the kindly affections which diffuses

happiness and comfort wherever it is exercised. To all such exercise of those affections which bind man to his fellow-men, the great principle of Christian duty gives a strength, stability, and permanence which never can arise from any lower source. For, much active benevolence may, and does, arise from motives of an inferior kind, and from certain feelings of our nature from which there results an actual and peculiar enjoyment in the discharge of offices of sympathy and kindness. Much real enjoyment arises from doing good to those whom we esteem and love; and from relieving the distresses of the virtuous and worthy. There is an actual reward in the return of gratitude, and in sentiments of respect and affection from those whom we have made to feel a weight of obligation which they cannot expect to repay. There is something more directly personal, or selfish, in exciting the love and

gratitude of those who may be able to return our kindness, and feel the most anxious desire to do so; and, in regard to cases of both descriptions, there is a separate and peculiar enjoyment, or actual reward, in the approbation of other men, especially those whom we respect, and in the general sentiments of regard and esteem which follow the man who makes himself known by deeds of disinterested and active benevolence. But the great principle of Christian duty carries us farther and higher; it calls upon us to do good to the evil and the unthankful, and to do it in secret, looking not for any return, whether of good offices, approbation, or gratitude, but simply to the love and devotedness which we owe to him who is the giver of all good. This, accordingly, is the important distinction so strikingly referred to in the word of God, "if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye; do not even the

publicans the same. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye ;—for sinners also do even the same. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your father who is in heaven, for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Such is the great principle enjoined by the apostle, of brotherly kindness. That it may hold its true place in the economy of a mind which is under the influence of faith, it must arise from no partial or selfish motives, no mere exercise of incidental feeling, nothing that has respect either to our own emotions, or to the opinions of other men. It must be a steady, consistent principle, pure in its origin, and uniform in its influence; it

must be founded on faith and knowledge, and cherished by temperance, patience, and godliness,—the willing service of filial affection,—a steady persevering course of active usefulness, influenced simply by the high spirit of love and devotedness to him who has redeemed us to God by his blood.

Go, then, ye who profess to serve this divine Master, go, and follow his steps. Deny yourselves the selfish indulgencies of those who know no better portion; go forth in search of those who are in want of your kindness; search out the hungry, the naked, the sick, the stranger, the prisoner;—visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction. Realize that eye which follows you in all your wanderings among the abodes of misery, disease and suffering. Realize continually that high principle of active usefulness which flows from affection to him who died for you; and realize continually the value which

he will assign to such a course of active exertion, not indeed as a ground of acceptance, but as a test of devotedness and love, "verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me."

VII. The mere exercise of deeds of benevolence and kindness does not alone constitute that character towards our fellow men which is the true and proper result of a sound moral condition. That state of the mind and of the heart which is founded on faith, and cherished by temperance, patience, and godliness will extend its influence over all those feelings and affections which refer to others, in every relation of life. The condition of mind which thus arises appears to constitute that which the apostle inculcates, when, to brotherly-kindness he calls upon us to add *Charity.*

This must be considered as claiming our deep and serious attention, when it is here given as the finishing quality of that character which is founded upon, and maintained by, an habitual principle of devotedness to God. The feelings which are included under it are enumerated by the apostle Paul, and are by him referred to the following heads. (1 Cor. xiii.)

1. *It suffereth long and is kind:* It exercises candor, indulgence, and forbearance in regard to the conduct of others, entering into their feelings with gentleness and kindness, and making every allowance for the circumstances in which they are placed, and the motives and feelings by which they are influenced. This disposition prevents us from hastily assigning unworthy motives or bad intentions; it induces us to take the most favorable view that we possibly can of the conduct of other men, and, even when appearances are against them, to

endeavor anxiously to discover favorable views and palliating circumstances. It thus leads us to be slow to take offence, to be unwilling to consider injuries as intended, to be above taking offence at trifles, and under real injuries, to be easily conciliated and ready to forgive. This temperament of mind is strikingly contrasted with one which we find so common in the world, —envious, suspicious, and censorious,—ready to be offended by trifles, to construe accidental circumstances into intended insults, and to impute to others bad intentions on the most frivolous grounds. Such a disposition is a source of wretchedness to those who are under its power, and of unhappiness to all with whom they are connected; and we cannot survey the distress which arises from ill-regulated temper, without perceiving how much the present happiness of men would be increased by the exercise of that charity which suffereth long and is kind.

The kindness, which is here associated with long suffering, seems to be distinct from the exercises of benevolence referred to under the former division of the subject. It appears to imply more particularly a tender regard to the feelings of others, which makes us studious to avoid wounding them by jealousies and suspicions, by peevishness or fretfulness, and by allowing trifles to ruffle the temper and disturb the social harmony. Many, who are not deficient in deeds of benevolence or friendship, are apt to forget how much the exercise of true kindness consists in gentleness, meekness, and tender consideration for the feelings of others; and it is melancholy to observe how much real unhappiness often exists in families and in communities which would be effectually prevented by the Christian grace of kindness.

2. *Charity envieth not.* Envy looks with

displeasure on the real or imagined happiness of others, leading men to compare their own situation with that of their neighbors, and to covet circumstances in their lot which seem to render it happier than their own. It is thus founded on discontent, a state of mind decidedly opposed to sound Christian feeling; for this teaches us to consider our lot, in all its circumstances, as assigned to us by the great Disposer of all things, and precisely adapted to the place which it is his pleasure we shall hold in this state of moral discipline. Envy, therefore, is not only injurious to a sound state of feeling towards other men, but is also destructive of our own moral culture. For it tends to withdraw our attention from our actual condition as responsible beings,—leading us to forget, amid fruitless longings after imagined good, the high responsibilities which pertain to our own condition, and thus to waste the precious hours

which are given us to prepare for the life which is to come. Christian charity, therefore, teaches us to rejoice in the good of others,—in their happiness, their honor, and their reputation. It is opposed to destraction,—and leads us to allow to other men, though rivals, or even enemies, all praise, honor, and reputation that are justly due to them,—to avoid every thing calculated to injure their good name, or to lower them in the public estimation,—and to defend them against such attempts when we find them made by others.

3. In the exercise of that correct state of moral feeling which we owe to other men, we are very much impeded by the false and exaggerated views which we are apt to form of our own importance, and the undue weight which we attach to our own feelings. In opposition to this, Christian Charity leads us to view our-

selves with humility, and this naturally induces us to view others with indulgence, candor and justice. Accordingly, the apostle adds, "*Charity vaunteth not itself,—is not puffed up.*" The immediate and natural result of this humble, calm, and considerate view of our own condition and our own feelings, in reference to those of other men, is a general propriety and decorum of behavior towards them,—"*doth not behave itself unseemly.*" A man acting under the influence of this law of Christian charity conducts himself with a correct and judicious regard to the situation of life in which he is placed;—he does not push himself into notice, or prefer himself to others; but is, in all circumstances of life, to his superiors respectful,—to his equals accommodating and courteous;—to his inferiors kind, gentle, and considerate. He is thus preserved from those improprieties and absurdities of conduct into which men are

led by pride and vanity,—putting themselves out of their proper place, and loosing sight of the proprieties of conduct adapted to their situation,—involving themselves with matters in which they have no concern ; and, by a disposition restless, meddling, and conceited, at once destroying their own peace, and injuring the peace of others.

4. The propensity in human nature which has the chief influence in separating man from man, and disturbing all the harmonies of life, is *Selfishness*. By one device or another men are ever seeking to promote their own interest, their own gratification,—their own ease, reputation or distinction. Hence arise the jealousies, suspicions and envies with which they view those who are likely to interfere with them in their favorite pursuits, and those who, in similar pursuits, have been more fortunate than

themselves. Christian charity strikes at the root of this propensity, so wide in its extent, so destructive in its influence ;—"*charity seeketh not her own.*" It would lead us into a field far too extensive for our present purpose, were we to endeavor to trace the manner in which selfishness enters into all our pursuits, and the extent to which it interferes with that spirit of kindness to our fellow-men to which so much importance is attached in the great practical rules of the gospel of Christ. Every one has only to watch minutely his own conduct to discover, in how many instances a regard to his own interest, comfort, or distinction interferes with the kindly feelings and the offices of kindness which he owes to others,—how often he is prevented by mere indolence, or a selfish regard to his own ease, from doing good in various ways which would cost him nothing but a little exertion ;—how often a regard to his own

feelings interferes with what is due to the feelings of other men ;—and how different the conduct of all of us would very often be, did we deliberately place ourselves in the situation of others, and calmly view their circumstances and their feelings, as if they were in our situation and we in theirs. There is not, in the high requirements of the gospel, a principle of more essential importance than this. When our Lord says, "if any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself,"—he calls us not to mortifications or austerities calculated only to inflict suffering on ourselves:—but he calls us, and he calls us "as one having authority," to renounce all those selfish indulgences, and selfish humors, and that pursuit of selfish interest, which interfere with the zealous and extensive exertions for the comfort and the good of others, to which he attaches so important a place as a test of our affection to him and our devotedness to his ser-

vice. In such a course he has left us a bright example, and he calls us to follow his steps. He calls us to enter with kindly interest into the wants and feelings of our brethren, and, in many instances, to sacrifice our own interest, ease, indulgence, and inclinations to theirs. By the high sanction of his own example, we are exhorted to have the same mind in us which was also in him;—and this exhortation is enforced by the solemn denunciation, that "if any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

5. The mind that is under the influence of Christian charity, "*is not easily provoked, and it thinketh no evil.*" Like its divine master it is meek and lowly, not apt to be offended by trifles, and, under real injuries, patient and forgiving. It is slow and cautious in forming an unfavorable opinion of others, or in imputing

to them bad designs or bad intentions; and, consequently, it is not apt, as so many are, to conjure up to itself imaginary injuries and imaginary enemies. That mental condition, which we usually distinguish by the names meekness, quietness, and magnanimity of mind, is equally conducive to a man's own comfort, and to the sound state of his moral feelings towards other men. It carries with it its own reward in the tranquillity which it brings to us in our passage through this scene of tumult and strife. While it is peculiarly favorable to the culture of the moral being, it tends also to preserve from numerous evils, mortifications, and destractions to which the opposite character exposes.—"Learn of me, says our Lord, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls."

6. This catalogue of Christian graces is strikingly concluded by a reference to that great

and broad principle of Christian feeling, which lies in a great measure, at the foundation of the whole,—"*charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.*" Viewing himself and all around him as immortal beings in their passage to an eternal world, the man of charity has for his first and great anxiety respecting his fellow-men, to see them walking in the truth,—to find among them the culture of those qualities which mark the healthy condition of the moral being, and its preparation for the solemn realities of an eternal world. When brought into comparison with those great concerns, all present things sink into insignificance. He can derive, therefore, no satisfaction from moral evil, even though it may contribute to his own benefit, as, in the transactions of life, it may often do. For how often may it happen that we derive advantage from the misconduct of rivals, and may be tempted to feel a secret satisfaction

at the loss of character on the part of those who perhaps have stood in the way of our favorite pursuits, either of interest, reputation, or comfort. How often might we turn to our advantage the quarrels of others, and thus be tempted to foster rather than to heal the feelings from which they arose. But whatever personal benefit he might derive from it, the man of charity cannot view with satisfaction what is displeasing to God, or destructive of the moral condition of an immortal being; and he will gladly sacrifice his own present feelings and present advantage, for the high achievement of rescuing a soul from death. In this great object he will exert himself to instruct the ignorant, to reclaim the vicious,—to win even his enemies by deeds of kindness,—to prevent differences,—to heal divisions, and to bring together as brethren those who have assumed the attitude of hatred and defiance. Feeling in himself all the su-

preme importance of "things not seen," it will be his habitual and earnest desire to promote among all around him a character and conduct governed by a sense of the overwhelming interest of a life that is to come.

7. The enumeration of those qualities of the mind which constitute Christian charity, is recapitulated by the apostle, in four expressions of a most comprehensive character; "*it beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things; endureth all things.*" The first of these expressions would have been more properly rendered, "covereth all things," and, when they are taken together, they display in a few words the great peculiarities of that conduct and character towards our fellow-men, which ought to arise out of the gospel of Christ. The man who is under its influence seeks to cover the faults of other men, to defend them

against misrepresentation or calumny,—and, in all his relations towards men, to treat them with meekness, forbearance, and kindness. He is disposed to form the most favorable opinion of others that circumstances will at all allow, and, when personally injured, to give the utmost possible weight to concessions or explanations, —to be easily conciliated, and ready to forgive. This justice and indulgence which he applies to the conduct of men, he extends also to their opinions, giving to their sentiments and statements a fair, calm, and attentive hearing, and judging of them with impartiality and candor. Farther, in regard to the character of other men, he does not, without great cause, depart from the favorable opinion of what may be done for their improvement, but takes advantage of every hopeful circumstance, and is thereby encouraged to persevere in his efforts to do them good. In the prosecution of this high de-

sign, he puts up with much waywardness, absurdity, and folly on the part of those whom he seeks to benefit,—not considering his own comfort or honor, but the great object which he has in view in the good of others; and in this he perseveres with constancy, however unpromising the circumstances may appear as to his ultimate success, or however unproductive of comfort to himself in the prosecution of them.

Such, then, is the exercise of the kindly feelings towards our fellow-men, which is represented as indispensable to that character which is founded on faith, virtue, and knowledge, and cherished by temperance, patience, and godliness. The importance attached to it in the word of God cannot be represented more strikingly than in the words of the apostle, where he teaches us, that without it knowledge is vain and faith is barren, and all acquirements and endowments, however high their

pretensions, are but an empty sound, that can never profit. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. . . . . And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

The whole subject, thus briefly and imperfectly delineated, is full of important instruction, which, in an especial manner, claims the attention of two descriptions of persons.

I. Are there those who maintain, that the doctrines of the Gospel are unfavorable to morality, because they offer acceptance in the sight of God to faith alone? Let such put away from them those flimsy and distorted conceptions of Christian truth, by which they voluntarily delude themselves. Let them look at the record of God, in all its harmony and consistency,—in all its extent, and all its purity. Let them see it requiring a higher tone of morals than ever was contemplated in the most exalted of human standards,—let them see it enjoining, as an indispensable part of Christian morality, all those dispositions and actions towards our fellow-men, which are included under the comprehensive terms of brotherly-kindness and charity. Let them contemplate it as extending its high and pure requirements, even to the thoughts, desires, and inclinations of the heart,

—and demanding purity within. Let them consider calmly and deliberately these important truths, and say, as candid and honest men, what estimate they form of the morality of the Gospel.

II. Let those who profess to be under the influence of the truths which are the objects of faith, see that they truly feel and really manifest their power. It is easy to assume the phraseology of religion ;—it is easy to acquire a knowledge of its doctrines, and to argue acutely and ingeniously on points of faith. It is not difficult to practise, with decorum, its rites and forms, to observe its ordinances, and to show all that zeal for the externals of religion by which a man acquires a certain character among his fellow-men. It is easy, also, to those who have the means, and it is gratifying to feelings which exist in the generality of mankind, to practise

much benevolence, and to show much real concern for alleviating the distresses of other men. But much of all this, it is to be feared, may and does exist, while there is none of that discipline of the heart, without which knowledge is vain, and faith an empty name. It is to the heart that the eye of Him looketh who cannot be deceived by external things; and it is when a man retires from all consideration of the opinions of his fellow-men, and looks seriously into those processes of his mind which are open to the Divine inspection,—it is then that he may discover his own moral condition, and may learn, if he seriously wishes to know the solemn truth, what he really is in the eye of God. Let him inquire what is the habitual current of his thoughts,—what the prevailing object of his desires,—what the governing motives of his conduct,—what place among them have the things of time, and what the things of eternity,—what

influence have the motives and principles of the world, and what the great principle of devotedness to God. It is thus that he may learn those "secrets of the heart," which at present are hidden from all human eyes, but will be fully revealed at the great day of account, and rigidly tried by the pure and holy standard of the law of God. The important truth, therefore, cannot be too often or too seriously contemplated, by every one who feels the overwhelming interest of eternal things,—that, whatever be his faith, and whatever his knowledge,—whatever be his character in the eye of man, and whatever his real and active usefulness to others, there is a distinct and most serious object of attention which immediately concerns the safety of the soul,—and this is, that, while he cultivates faith and knowledge, he shall give all diligence to add to these, temperance, patience, and godliness. Without these, while he greatly benefits others,

he may inflict irreparable injury on himself;—amid many good works, he may neglect that discipline of the heart in which is involved his own safety as a moral being.

But, while this first and great concern receives the attention which it demands from every immortal being, let it never be forgotten, that there is a fatal error in the mental economy, unless the fruits are manifest in every part of the conduct and character. In this respect, the high principle of Christian faith ought to maintain its superiority over all other motives and principles, however honorable these may be in themselves. The great question to those who profess to be under its power is,—"What do ye more than others?" Are there men, who, from kindness of natural feeling, or those principles of honor and integrity which prevail in the world, perform many deeds of exalted integrity, benevolence, or kindness?—THE MAN OF

FAITH must do more. Are there those, who, on such principles, show much mildness, forbearance, and forgiveness?—*the man of faith* must do more. It is vain to talk of faith and godliness, while an inconsistent conduct, a contracted selfishness, or an unsubdued temper, gives the empty profession the lie. When the great principle really exists within, it will be manifest by its fruits,—and when it is thus exhibited, in all its consistency, and all its power, —it is then that it challenges the conviction of those who oppose themselves, and compels them to acknowledge its reality and its truth, and to "glorify our Father who is in heaven."

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